

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-17 (cancelled)

Claim 18 (Currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 29 wherein the ~~elastic~~ spring element advances the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing for wedging the portion of the bearing shell further into a gap formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing as wear to the portion of the bearing shell occurs.

4, Claim 19 (Withdrawn/Currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim ~~17 further including~~ 29 wherein the spring element is a disk that is arranged between the housing cover and the bearing shell, wherein center portions of both the housing cover and the disk extend outwardly away from the ball stud.

Claim 20 (Withdrawn) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 19 wherein the housing cover is made of a plastically deformable material, the center portion of the housing cover being axially deformable toward the ball stud.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 20 wherein the center portion of the housing cover contacts the center portion of the disk to urge the disk against the bearing shell.

Claim 22 (Previously presented) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 29 wherein the bearing shell includes a deformable area, the deformable area enabling the bearing shell to be adapted for use with joint housings of varying tolerances.

Claim 23 (Previously presented) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 29 wherein the bearing shell includes separate and distinct first and second parts, the first part being an upper shell and the second part being a lower shell.

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Claim 24 (Currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 23 wherein the ~~elastic element includes a~~ spring element ~~that~~ is arranged between the upper shell and the lower shell, the lower shell being the portion of the bearing shell that is plastically deformed.

Claim 25 (Previously presented) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 24 wherein the spring element is a wave-shaped spring washer.

Claim 26 (cancelled)

Claim 27 (Previously presented) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 30 wherein the collar includes deformable areas, the deformable areas of the collar enabling a combination of the upper shell, the spring element, and the lower shell to be adapted for use with joint housings of varying tolerances.

Claim 28 (cancelled)

Claim 29 (Currently amended) A ball-and-socket joint comprising:

 a joint housing having first and second axial ends;

 a ball head provided with a ball stud extending from the ball head;

 a bearing shell having elastic properties and being received in the joint housing whereby receiving the ball head, the ball stud extending outward of the first axial end of the joint housing;

 a housing cover for closing the second axial end of the joint housing; and

~~an elastic~~ a spring element interposed between the housing cover and at least a portion of the bearing shell preloading the portion of the bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing thereby plastically deforming the portion of the bearing shell into its final ball-shaped contour.

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Claim 30 (Currently amended) A ball-and-socket joint comprising:

a joint housing having first and second axial ends;

a ball head with a ball stud extending from the ball head, the ball head being received in the joint housing and the ball stud extending outward of the first axial end of the joint housing, a gap being formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing;

a bearing shell received in the joint housing for supporting the ball head for tilting relative to the joint housing;

a housing cover for closing the second axial end of the joint housing; and

~~structure~~ means interposed between the housing cover and at least a portion of the bearing shell ~~and~~ for acting upon the portion of the bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing and, in response to wear of the portion of the bearing shell, to wedge the portion of the bearing shell into the gap,

the bearing shell including separate and distinct first and second parts, the first part being an upper shell and the second part being a lower shell,

the upper shell, which is located further from the first axial end of the joint housing than the lower shell, including a collar that is wedged between the housing cover and a shoulder of the joint housing and prevents movement of the upper shell relative to the joint housing.